1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

and sisters' children would gather to divide what wealth there was. The greatest share would, of course, go to the brother who would marry the widow, but all the others would get something.

"And his children, the children he made, would they get anything?"

"Why no, the children he made are his wife's children. They belong to the family of his wife!"

"But suppose he cared for them very much. . . ."

"Then he might have made them some presents now and then when he was alive, but even then some people say it is better not to give them too much. When a man dies his possessions go to his family. If this man's children, who really belong to his wife, were to take things now, they would get a kunu for it, and they might get another kunu which the father had, for if they got his possessions, his kunu would go to them, too, and there would perhaps be one in their own family that had come to them through their mother. No man or woman wants this."

It is kunu, then, which sees to it that the tribal law of succession and inheritance through the female line is not violated.

4

There was the case of Asikanu, our paddler, who was the brother of the head of an important clan, which gave us still another instance of the workings of kunu. Asikanu was, in his own right, not a negligible figure. When his brother died, it might be he who would succeed to the headship of the clan. When the other paddlers wanted things of us, they would come to ask in his name. "It is not a small thing when Asikanu asks," they would say. "He is a big man; he is the brother of our chief. You must not refuse him."

Asikanu had a way with the women, although it would have been best if at least one of them had resisted him. She was married, and, when her husband discovered her infidelity, she went to Asikanu. Now this was as it should

Is Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SRS Bush Negroes SRS
Saramacca

Soon our men, too, began to stir, and, as we came out of our hammocks, Bayo and Angita entered the clearing. They were just now returning from the dance at Pa'aba.

"*A-yo, a baya kebi!*—Yes, they danced hard," Bayo told us. "Obia came strong."

With Angita was a man we had not seen before, holding a small child by the hand.

"This is Awingu, my brother-in-law," said Angita in explanation. "His eyes trouble him. I brought him to you for medicine."

After the exchange of courtesies demanded by the visit, we turned to the child.

"Is this your child, Awingu?" we asked.

His answer came promptly. "No, he is not my child. He is my wife's child. I made him."

Here was a fine distinction. He made him, but the child was not his.

Just then our cook came up with a small present for the child, but, since he would not take it from his hands or ours, Angita gave it to him.

"Thank you, father," he said to Angita.

Angita looked down affectionately at the youngster. "Two, three years more, Awingu, and he will be ready to go and live with his father at Gankwe. Do you remember your father at Gankwe? It was he who showed you how to make a gun from a reed. And you made it well. . . ."

There appeared, then, to be yet another father, for it was clear that Angita was not speaking of himself when he referred to the Gankwe father who had shown the child how to make a play gun.

All this, in itself, however confusing to a visitor, is by no means an unusual phenomenon. Different peoples have their own sanctions for establishing kinship and their own designations for relationships. In the city we had been told many tales of the manner of life of these Negroes of the bush. And the "matriarchate," as the custom of counting descent through the mother was termed, had often come up when these people were being discussed.

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

611 602 "Among them only the mothers count, because among savages, who can tell who the real father is? That is why a child calls many men 'father,'" we had heard variously explained and elaborated.

Yet here was a man who said without hesitation, "No, he is not my child. He is my wife's child. I made him." And the very next instant the child called Angita father, and Angita referred to still another man as the father who would in a few years take the child with him to live and train him for manhood.

Any number of questions came to our minds, but at daybreak a stranger coming to the planting ground of a village not his own is the least willing of talkers.

"This is not your child, Awingu," we took the occasion to remark when we were saying goodbye, "yet he seems to like you very much."

"*Ma, tye! Ma Neng'e!*—Mother of all Negroes! What would you have? I am his father!"

The man showed by his amused expression that this was a story to carry back to his village. Only the politeness due a stranger kept Awingu and Angita from laughing aloud at this strange question. But Awingu was a thoughtful fellow. "Tell me," he said, after a while, "in your white man's country, don't children care for their fathers?"

2

602 But there were not only multiple fathers, as the story told in the city ran. The matter was not disposed of so simply as that. In point of fact, each person seemed to have several mothers as well. Take the case of Angita himself, whose brother-in-law we met at dawn in the provision ground. Angita was first pointed out to us by Tita, who, behind her back, was called Mother Snake. It was at Gankwe when we came to see the dancing for the dead Zimbi.

"Look," she had said, as she indicated one of the principal dancers who wore seed rattles at his ankles. "This is

Herskovits & Herskovits 2-6 (1933-1958) 1934
Bush Negroes
Surinam

968 "If it is the man who is dead, then the woman takes her
915 girl children to live with her, but her sons she sends away to live elsewhere. A man's spirit will not harm his daughters. He loves them. But his sons, he will kill. . . . When a woman dies, then it is the sons that the man will keep with him in the house, and the daughters must go away. The yorka of a woman will protect her sons, but she will destroy the daughters when she visits the place where she once lived."

5

602 To her child the Bush Negro mother gives at birth
851 membership in all her own blood groups. The child is of her *wan*, or household. He belongs to her *nêe*, or great family, which is an aggregate of many households. He is a member of her *lo*, or clan, which is composed of a number of great families, and which holds political sway over a given
613 portion of the land. The tie of all these groupings is a blood tie, a common female ancestress who lived long ago, or several women, daughters of the same mother, who had been the first to live with the runaway ancestors here in the bush, or several women who came from one people in Africa, and were the first to bear children to the rebels in the jungle. Every legal, every economic implication which this tradition of descent and inheritance through the female line might hold, is faithfully adhered to.

611 The mother does indeed count, as the tales told us in the
513 city insisted. But what of the father?

That the Bush Negro understands fully the rôle that
842 both father and mother play in the procreation of the
532 young was everywhere apparent. The wood carving which a father made for his young daughter had designs on it of the kind which bore the general designation "*wowi bo' wuye*—man and woman." Whatever the traceries on the carvings given by a man to his woman during courtship, or after marriage, whatever animals might be represented, the essential symbolism was that of fertility, and the

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Chapter Eight

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

THE Bush Negro family is not a family in our sense of the word. In the Surinam jungle the Djuka family is polygamous and matrilineal. The unit of society is the hut, where the mother and her children live.

In order to understand the marriage customs of the Bush Negro tribes it is first necessary to forget for the time being the system of patriarchal family life under which the white men of our age live. One unconsciously takes the customs of one's own society as a norm, and passes moral judgment on exotic customs by their deviation from that norm. This habit of thinking must be avoided as far as possible in considering a primitive society, though it is difficult even for an agile mind to make dispassionately the transition from one culture in which the father is dominant, to another, in which his position is not important. On the other hand, many of our

[P. 118 IS BLANK]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

prejudices about sex and marriage may become less rooted by a comparison with the customs of a primitive society.

The Djukas, like a number of other primitive tribes, reckon descent only through the female line; property rights are transmitted through the maternal side of the house. Fatherhood is a fact of relative unimportance.

Polygamy is the practice. Each wife lives in a separate hut (often in a separate village), which belongs to her because her husband built it for her. A man has as many wives as he wants, or can keep. The wives get along together fairly amicably. The cancer of matrimonial jealousy characteristic of our own system, is of narrow range and effect among the Djukas.

The head of the family is not the father, but the mother's oldest male relative—her brother or her mother's brother. *The father is technically unrelated to his children.* As a matter of biological fact, he can never be sure of his paternity, whereas maternity is never in doubt. All children belong to their mother's family, and are subject to the authority of her brother or her maternal uncle. The latter is more closely related to them than any other male.

A group of families related through the female line constitute a *m'beh*, and several m'beh together make up a *lo*, or clan. These groups are all reckoned through the mother. Husband and wife may belong to different m'beh and lo, but children of the union belong only to their mother's group. At first sight the father seems negligible in this arrangement, but it must be remembered that he is very likely the brother

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

of some other woman, and exercises authority over her children rather than over his own.

The Djuka family, then, consists of a group of people all descended from a single woman, and related to each other through the female line. Whatever family authority exists resides in the mother's or grandmother's brothers; to them the children defer; from them the children will inherit property and title. The paternity of the children is unessential. This type of social organization is called matrilineal.

We should, perhaps, not expect to find romantic love, as we know it, among the Djukas. The peculiar transports and attenuated delights of romantic passion are a rather extraordinary phenomenon which, according to Briffault, does not exist outside of Western civilization. Romance requires a high development of individuality among women so that one may be desirable above all others. Where women are mutually interchangeable, romance cannot exist. The Djuka black does not love a woman; he loves women. Love among the Djukas is not a brainstorm but a physiological release, and marriage an economic device.

The young people have complete knowledge and some experience of sex at an extremely early age and are usually married at sixteen or seventeen. They are fairly promiscuous before marriage and extremely so afterward. This, again according to Briffault, is the rule in tribes retaining the matrilineal tradition. Since intercourse before marriage is a practice that the Djukas make little effort to restrain, sex is a common affair, not particularly connected with marriage.

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

obeiahs, house gods, fetish houses, menstrual huts, and matrilineal system of inheritance are all to be found as ancient customs among the forest tribes of the West Coast. Other details, such as the use of chickens for sacrificial animals, the huts with their rectangular walls, the manufacture of butter from the palm worm, the sacredness of snakes and alligators, the use of drums for religious supplication, and the beating of them with the hand instead of with a stick as the Indians do, are also customs which are similar to West African customs and probably derived from them. The impaled turtle-shell on a staff, the badge of the witch doctor's profession, represents the symbol for the female genitalia among some West African tribes. The Bush Negroes' boats and paddles are typically African in design. The *awasa* dance of the Saramaccaners was borrowed from the Aucaners, among whom it is a direct West African survival.

From the study of these culture survivals among the Djuka tribes it can be seen that most of the jungle civilization of the Bush Negroes is derived from their West African ancestry, modified here and there by contact with the Indians of their new home. The remainder of the material culture of the Bush Negroes is borrowed from the white settlements along the coast, from which gunpowder, fish-hooks, bush-knives, and other articles filter upstream.

[p. 192 is Hook]

/17 cont./

101 103 175 113 1. Archives du Ministère de la France d'Outre-Mer, Guyane /Archives of the Ministry of Overseas France, Guiana/. A3-02.

611 /18/ Villages and Kin Groups

Among all the kinship systems which existed in the African tribes from which they issued, the Refugee Blacks came back unanimously, and from the beginning, to matrilineal filiation.

571 613 643 Their social system is symbiosis, under the authority of the grand man, of a certain number of localized matrilineal kin groups.

613 Matrilineal kin groups of the Boni. With the Boni the basic grouping is the lineage, in the rigorous sense of the term, understanding by that all descendants in maternal line from a single ancestress.

To designate the kin groups the Boni employ almost interchangeably the words lo (troop, band) and bέέ, womb. In fact these expressions correspond to two variant interpretations of the same notion:

614 lo: matrilineage in the widest sense, understanding by that all persons knowing that they are issue of the same ancestress, even if the genealogical ties are forgotten, and even if these persons are scattered in several villages under different authorities;

lo: lineage fraction grouped in one village and constituting a distinct social unit.

The lineage bears a name whose origin is forgotten by present-day Boni; some of these names allude to a plantation or to a slave-owner, for example Lapé (La Paix a plantation of the Cottica River); as for others, the name of the founding ancestress may be involved. Example: Kawina (name of the lineage constituting the village of Papalkoe).

614 /31 cont./
769 Another very important principle in the minds of the Refugee
796 Blacks is that prayers must be collective; the principal ceremonies,
613 such as the New Year's prayer, must bring together, at least in principle, the total lineage.

These notions certainly have influenced the custom of the
182 Refugee Blacks with respect to residence and marriage. The lineage
613 cannot allow the permanent departure of a woman from her native
614 country any more than that of a man. In the populations of Black
591 Africa with matrilineal filiation, this conception is reconciled
[171] with the necessities of practical living in the following manner: the wife leaves her relatives to settle down with her husband, but when her children reach adulthood they must return there. Thus one cannot attribute to this preoccupation alone the special system of marriage among the Refugee Blacks, which does not involve the permanent cohabitation of man and wife. We shall see that this system was inspired by social and psychological necessities. But concern for the unity of the lineage, to which it corresponds perfectly, has surely contributed to make of it a rigorous principle of customary law.

601 Kinship within the matrilineage. The kinship terms translate a
613 purely classificatory system. It depends only on the number of
•611 generations separating from the foundress. The sons of women descended from the foundress in uterine line are regarded as members of the matrilineage and united in the system of appellation. The children of these men are no longer part of the matrilineage.

/229 cont./

784 613 [428] The kunu and Boni family life. It follows from the detailed examination we have just made of the situation of the various lineages that the transmission of the kunu within the uterine kin group is a rigorous law which suffers no exception whatever. [501] [202] The process of assimilation which permits in a certain measure, on the social plane, the integration of fragments of paternal kin (like A-ara Bakka 3) into a group does not come into play here. [611] [529] Unity with respect to the kunu can therefore be regarded as a rigorous criterion of a common matrilineal origin. The Boni feel it as an obvious fact and in such a case it is the proof that comes to their minds: "We are of the same origin since we have the same kunu."

784 613 571 182 Thus the kunu appears as the principal cement of the unity of the groups. It opposes the dissociation of the lineages; this curse which weighs collectively upon a group and which can be exercised only collectively is an iron bond which nothing can break. It obliges the Refugee Blacks to surmount their individualistic tendencies, their egoism which, if they acted freely, would soon have scattered them into a dust of [808] separate persons. In the face of adversity each one accepts with good grace obedience to the elders, who alone know how [672] to talk to the gods and appease them. Nobody ever is indignant or even surprised to be struck down for the offense of another; there is not a movement of revolt or hostility against the one who by his inattention or inconsiderateness has brought on misfortune. On this plane the members of a lineage feel like cells of a single body.

784 613 672 The collective legal responsibility of the members of a group in the domain of customary law flows from the kunu. We have observed that several times, notably at the time of the obsequies for Kossida (Afi lineage) in October, 1956. The president of the Afiti kuutu condemned the members of